



**William D. Gore, Sheriff**

(858) 974-2259

## **San Diego County Sheriff's Department – Media Relations**

Lt. Ricardo Lopez, Media Relations Director

[www.SDSheriff.net](http://www.SDSheriff.net)

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### **Sheriff Bill Gore Statement on Enforcement of Public Health Orders**

The San Diego County Sheriff Department's posture on enforcement of the public health orders and the Governor's Stay at Home Order is very straightforward.

The first approach our deputies will always take is to educate. Not only to educate as to what the orders do and do not permit, but also to educate about the need for all of us in San Diego to use good hygiene, sanitation and physical distancing practices to stop the spread of COVID-19 and thereby save lives. The second approach is to gain voluntary compliance. The first leader of the London Metropolitan Police, Sir Robert Peel wrote in 1829, "The police must secure the willing cooperation of the public in voluntary observance of the law to be able to secure and maintain public respect." Those words are as true today as they were then.

Finally, San Diego County Sheriff's Deputies will enforce the orders, which do carry the weight of law, as needed and as appropriate. Every situation is different, and it is my intent as Sheriff to give my deputies every possible resource and authority to handle any situation they encounter. So far in May, we have responded to 330 calls for service complaining of violations of the public health orders and have issued only two citations. We have cited on less than 1% of the calls where a violation was reported or observed. This is what education and voluntary compliance looks like in San Diego and I am proud of the people of this county for flattening the curve and stopping the spread. Deputies work hard to develop and maintain strong relationships with the communities they serve. When people defy the law, they put law enforcement officers in a very difficult situation with few options. Our ability to maintain order and protect public health in a mutually respectful and civil manner during these last few weeks is of the utmost importance to public safety and to our recovery.

In our democracy, we have three separate and distinct branches of government. The legislative branch makes the law, the judicial branch interprets the law and the executive branch enforces the law. As your Sheriff, I want to stay firmly in the business of enforcing the law. As a general rule, until a law's unconstitutionality has been judicially declared in appropriate proceedings, no person may disregard or violate it with impunity. It is neither my role nor my desire to thwart legislative intent by refusing to enforce a law. That is a slippery slope. The public has an obligation to follow the law until such time as it is declared unconstitutional. Our system of governance has a process in place to petition for redress. Those who wish the laws to be changed should focus their efforts on the legislators who make the laws or bring issues to the courts so they can interpret the law. Law enforcement's proper role is to simply enforce the law in a fair, impartial and constitutional manner. That is what my deputies have been doing since day one and what they will continue to do as we move to re-open San Diego County in the days and weeks ahead.

